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AUTHOR Ehman, Lee H.
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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses Channel One, a 12 minute education television news program broadcast to over 12,000 schools in the United States each school morning. The programming adds over 30 hours of potential information during the school year, most of it related to social studies purposes. Because Channel One is viewed by all students, teachers can count on a common basis for discussion and other class work. Channel One has the potential for putting all students at the same starting point with basic news information. How this opportunity is utilized depends greatly on teachers. The purpose of this research was to study and describe how Channel One is perceived by social studies teachers, their students, and their parents, and how it is used in the classroom. The study compared questionnaire data from the 1990-91 and 1992-93 school years. The paper summarizes findings from nine previous research reports. A consistent picture emerged showing administrators were most positive about Channel One, followed by teachers, parents, and students. This study resulted in two patterns: (1) in both years teachers were more positive about depth of coverage on Channel One than were students, and the disparity was very large; and (2) while students' attitudes were very stable across the two years, the teachers showed some erosion from 1991 to 1993 in their assessment of depth. The two studies showed a dramatic negative change over the 2 years for teachers in their assessment of the competence of Channel One commentators. Attitudes were positive for quality of programming and general worth for both students and teachers. (DK)

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ED 366 537

Channel One in Social Studies: Three Years Later

Lee H. Ehman

Indiana University

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Introduction and Purpose

"Channel One" is a 12-minute educational television news program broadcast daily to over 12,000 U.S. schools each morning of the school week. About 6,800,000 students in grades 6 through 12 view it, more than 40% of all enrolled in the nation. Its avowed purpose is to inject into the secondary school curriculum knowledge and interest about national and global current affairs. In addition to ten minutes of news reporting and special features chosen for interest to youth, two minutes of commercial advertising is included in each broadcast, a controversial aspect of the program that has resulted in a few states such as California and New York, and many school districts, deciding not to adopt the programming. There are also restrictions on its use. In Indiana, for example, the Attorney General established that it must be shown in "non-instructional time," thus defining legally its place in the school as an add-on, not a part of the regular curriculum.

Whittle Communications, a for-profit firm based in Knoxville, Tennessee, began delivering the program in March, 1990, on a pilot test basis, and instituted regular broadcasts in August, 1990, after two years of planning and field testing. The company provides at no cost to each participating school a satellite antenna, receiver, and video recorder; television monitors for each 23 students; and installation of cabling which links all these components to classrooms of the schools. In return for the use and maintenance of this equipment during a three year, renewable contract period, the school obligates all students to be present during the broadcast each school day.

This programming adds over 30 hours of potential information during the school year, most of it highly related to social studies purposes. The delivery of the information is through a medium, television, that is generally accepted and attended to by students. Furthermore, Channel One is viewed by all students, not just an unpredictable fraction, so that teachers can count on a common basis for discussion and other class work. This is an unusual opportunity, because even with required reading assignments it is often the case that some students have not read the material. Channel One has the

potential for putting all students at the same starting point with basic news information. Of course, how this opportunity is utilized depends greatly on teachers.

The purpose of this research is to study and describe how Channel One is perceived by social studies teachers, their students, and their parents, and how it is used in the classroom. The study will compare questionnaire data from the 1990-91 and 1992-93 school years in a middle school in which I am presently conducting a year-long ethnographic study.

Findings from Previous Research

A large-scale three-year research project, "Taking the Measure of Channel One," based at the Institute for Social Research at the University of Michigan, and funded by Whittle Communications, has explored Channel One since its inception, with two reports published and another forthcoming in 1994.

The first report (Johnston & Brzezinski 1992) examined 11 pairs of high schools, matched on general locality, proximity to urban centers, grade levels, and size. One school in each pair showed Channel One, and the other did not. About 3,200 students and 900 teachers and administrators responded to questionnaires, and students completed pre- and post-tests on current events knowledge during January and May, 1991. In general teachers and students rated the program positively, and over the course of the year teacher attitudes toward it remained constant. For example, teachers were asked if they would recommend Channel One to other schools and teachers, with 60% responding "strongly" or "very strongly." About three-quarters of the students reported news on the programs as "very interesting" or "a little interesting," and somewhat higher percentages were obtained for interest in the special features and issues reporting.

The study also compared Channel One and non-Channel One schools students on knowledge of news and current events. Two knowledge tests of unreported reliability and validity were used, in January and May of 1991. There were very slight differences in favor of the Channel One schools at both points in

time, with an average difference of one question out of 30 in January, and about one-half item in May. The researchers found that the differences were higher for students earning higher grades. There were also small advantages by gender, favoring boys, and ethnic identity, favoring Caucasian students. Comparisons on attitudes toward national and global issues, political involvement, government institutions, and culturally different groups showed no differences between students viewing Channel One and those not seeing it. Nor did the students differ in interest expressed in seeking out news in other forms outside school.

The second year's research report (Johnston & Anderman 1993) aimed at identifying school characteristics which differentiated schools with relatively high from relatively low average knowledge scores measured during the 1991-92 school year. The researchers selected six of the 11 Channel One schools from the first year and constructed case studies, using observation, student focus groups, one-on-one interviewing, and student essays. These case studies compared three schools whose students were highest in knowledge of current events with three whose students' knowledge was lowest. The researchers asserted that six school factors, some interrelated, helped explain high- versus low-achieving Channel One schools. These included commitment of teachers to use the news content in the curriculum, as evidenced by regular discussion following the broadcasts; consensus among teachers that an important educational goal was expanding students' awareness of national and world events; curricular flexibility, referring to the extent of pressure to "ground cover" subject matter; school climate; showing Channel One at the beginning of an academic period rather than in homeroom; and teacher and student valuing current events information equally with "academic content."

The University of Michigan study summarized above is the largest-scale research project on Channel One thus far. A number of narrower and shorter-term studies have reported findings regarding student civic knowledge and student and teacher attitudes toward Channel One, as well as its use and integration into instruction and curriculum of schools.

The present author conducted a study of one high school and two junior high schools in 1991 (Ehman 1991). That study, precursor of the present report, found that students, teachers, and parents believed that students gained important knowledge about current events and, to a lesser extent, about geography, from viewing Channel One. Increases in perceived interest about news and current events were also documented. Students and parents reported discussions at home of news seen on Channel One.

Students reported that teachers carried out considerable discussion about Channel One news in school, while fewer teachers reported regular discussion of Channel One while teaching their subject matter classes. Few teachers include Channel One material in assignments or tests. It was also found that about half the teachers use the supplementary print and video materials provided by Channel One.

Students and teachers rated Channel One quality quite positively. On the five quality dimensions of accuracy, depth, lack of bias, competence of commentators, and overall quality compared to regular TV news, students were more critical than teachers. For students only one factor, lack of bias, received substantially less than 50% approval. Also, few teachers reported what they believed to be objectionable content in Channel One programs. There was both support and disapproval of this censorship on the part of teachers. About one in ten teachers and students found the commercials to be objectionable. The "public service" messages such as avoiding chemicals and staying in school were received very positively.

The students, teachers, and parents rated Channel One's overall value to the school as very high. Very few--13% or less--judged it to be unnecessary because it might be redundant with other sources of news. Most, 79% or more, believed it to be a worthwhile addition to the school. Teachers generally believed Channel One worth the time and effort spent on it, and half viewed it as adding resources for teaching their subjects.

Turning to other researchers, a survey study of 51 North Carolina and Mississippi schools claims that while student knowledge of current events

improved from October to December, 1990, the change could not be attributed to Channel One (Supovitz 1991). However, students in those Mississippi schools "...in which teachers integrated video news programs into their lessons showed significantly better knowledge of current events than either classes that did not integrate these programs or classes that had no video news programs at all" (p. ii-iii). This difference did not occur for North Carolina schools.

A year-long study compared students in two large, neighboring Arizona school districts. Some schools in each district subscribed to Channel One, and others did not, constituting a "...natural experimental-control group division...." (Hayes 1991, 53). Using a random sample of about 1,300 junior and senior high school students, he established no current events knowledge differences between the districts, either at high school or junior high school levels, controlling for a number of variables. He did not find differential effectiveness for students "at risk," which tends to contradict Johnston and Brzezinski's (1992) finding that academic performance is correlated with current events knowledge. He found small, non-significant differences favoring males over females, which agrees with Johnson and Brzezinski.

Two researchers matched two Michigan high schools which had been receiving Channel One for one year with two that had not subscribed (Greenberg & Brand 1993). About 800 students responded to two questionnaires. They used two different 10-item current news tests, six weeks apart, to assess knowledge of specific news events (5 items on each test) and general news knowledge (also 5 items per test). They found that on knowledge of specific news events there were small (effect sizes of .25 and .50, respectively) but statistically significant differences in favor of the Channel One schools, with the gap larger in the second testing. For more general news knowledge, however, no difference was found in the first testing, and a very small difference (effect size of .16) favoring the Channel One schools appeared 6 weeks later. There were no discernable differences on interest in or attention to the news through other media. The researchers also examined differences in evaluation of and intent to purchase products advertised on Channel One, and found they

were slightly higher in the Channel One schools (effect sizes were .20 and .13). However, there were no differences in reports of actual purchases. Finally, using a "materialist attitudes" scale whose reliability coefficient was only .52, they found a small (effect size .21) but significant difference, where Channel One viewers were more materialistic.

Huffman (1991) examined the influence of Channel One on student interest in current events, and how teachers integrated the study of current events into the curriculum. She used questionnaires to study all teachers in two schools, a junior and a senior high, and one class each in the two schools. She found that teachers as well as students believe that students' interest in current events is greater as a result of watching Channel One. Teachers who use the program primarily as the basis of class discussions believe this to be an effective instructional device, but few actually integrate the Channel One information into their teaching outside these post-broadcast discussions. Finally, Huffman found that social studies teachers were more likely than teachers of other subjects to use Channel One in their teaching.

Henshaw (1992) surveyed all 40 superintendents in Utah's public schools in 1991-92, and found that 28 of the districts were using Channel One. The superintendents rated it very positively, especially with respect to contributing to students' understanding of current events. They did not express high levels of concern about the program, with the highest relative concern being whether Channel One supported the curriculum. Henshaw also surveyed a teachers and students in single Utah district, and found as a result of Channel One exposure no perceived change in students' TV news viewing frequency but somewhat less reading about news and current events, and more interest and knowledge in these matters. Teachers believed the programming appropriate and valuable in augmenting the regular curriculum, and that the advertising was not inappropriate. Ninety percent of the teachers thought Channel One should be continued.

A study of 192 Indiana teachers' attitudes and reported use of Channel One was conducted through questionnaires (Collins 1992). Teacher opinions toward Channel One as providing important and relevant information for students were generally positive, with between 50% and 60% giving positive responses to a number of items, a level lower than for a group of administrators from the same schools. Over two-thirds believed that the program should be continued. Collins found slightly more positive attitudes on the part of social studies teachers than those in other subjects. Turning to the use of Channel One in the classroom, she found relatively little use, with about one-third indicating monthly or more frequent use. Fewer than 10% made assignments involving Channel One information. One reason Collins gives for the low levels of use and integration in the curriculum is that the schools surveyed do not provide time for followup discussions, a factor identified as important in this regard by Johnston and Anderman (1993).

Summary. A generally consistent picture emerges from the nine research reports summarized above. Administrators are most positive about Channel One, followed by teachers, parents, and students, more or less in that order (Collins, Ehman, Henshaw). These groups tend to believe that students learn about and are more interested in news and current events, and seek them out by attending more to regular news sources outside school. However, in the four comparison studies attempting to document measured student learning (Greenberg & Brand, Hayes, Johnston & Brzezinski, and Supovitz), there are very small or no differences in current events knowledge favoring Channel One schools.

In classrooms where Channel One is used beyond its actual showing, discussion of one or more of its news items or special topics was the nearly exclusive use. Few teachers--fewer than 10% (Collins, Ehman)--incorporated information from the program in assignments or tests. While Channel One is "used" through discussion, it is not integrated into the instruction and curriculum of regular subjects in a meaningful way. Collins points out that a factor inhibiting teachers from integrating the broadcasts in the schools she surveyed was that it was shown in homerooms, not in regular classes.

Johnston and Anderman pointed out several factors gleaned from their case studies which contribute to the higher average knowledge scores of students. Among these are teachers' commitment to and use of Channel One in classrooms subsequent to its showing, a finding echoed by Supovich--in one of his two states, where Channel One is discussed, knowledge is higher. Johnston and Anderman also observe that showing Channel One at the beginning of a regular academic class rather than in a homeroom, with limited or no discussion or even more integration possibilities, might be a significant factor contributing to more knowledge gains.

Methods

This study has a longitudinal cohort design, using survey data collection methods. It has data from different cohorts of students and their parents from the same grades at two points in time, April 1991 and April, 1993. Teachers respondents comprised a panel study, however, because the same group was surveyed at both times, with a small turnover.

The 1991 data collection involved three schools, a high school and two middle schools. It was originally intended that data be collected from all three in 1993. However, the high school principal elected not to participate the second time. Further, the principal of one of the middle schools preferred to keep the numbers of classrooms surveyed very low, resulting in a very small sample from that school. I decided to eliminate the second middle school from the analysis, leaving data from one middle school.

There is a second reason for this decision. I am in the midst of a year-long ethnographic study in the remaining middle school. Part of the study involves in-depth examination of how Channel One is perceived and used by student and teachers in the classrooms. Later, I can incorporate the present longitudinal survey results from this one school into descriptions and interpretations from the qualitative data.

The School. The school is the only middle school in a rapidly growing town of 19,000 located 20 miles from a midwestern city. In the fall of 1993,

the school has just over 1,300 students in grades 6 through 8, about 72 teachers, including special education specialists and aides, and eight other professional staff members. It has five feeder elementary schools. The population is predominately middle class and nearly all Caucasian, but a sizeable fraction of students are from less affluent homes. About 11% receive free or reduced-cost lunch. Average daily attendance is about 94.5%, and about 80 percent of the district's high school graduates continue in some form of post-secondary education.

From 1991 through 1993, Channel One was shown either during the first part of the first academic class period or during a 15-minute homeroom at the beginning of the school day. At the beginning of the present 1993-94 school year, (after the second questionnaire was administered), the school adopted a flexible block schedule permitting considerable latitude for teacher teams to decide when to broadcast the program. At present the four 6th grade teams show it at the beginning of the first academic period of the day, language arts, which lasts for 90 minutes. This permits ample discussion time should the teachers elect to conduct them. In contrast, because of the structure of their schedules, the seventh and eighth grade teams show it at the very end of the day, with virtually no time for post-broadcast discussion.

The school changed its name in the summer of 1993 from "junior high school" to "middle school." This symbolic move follows a shift in its programs and instruction toward a middle school philosophy, including team planning and interdisciplinary teaching; formation of student "teams" of from 110 to 140 within the three grade levels; a flexible, blocked schedule, permitting team decision-making about scheduling instruction within blocks; extensive use of cooperative learning; some portfolio assessment of student progress; dramatically increased involvement in parents in the life of the school; and a shift of decision-making from the superintendent and his staff to the principal and her staff, with corresponding increased involvement by teachers and other staff in school decision-making generally.

The school is an "exploring school" in the Coalition of Essential Schools, and has been granted extra funds over a three-year period by the state department of instruction to support extensive in-service staff training and external visitations. While there are teacher dissenters regarding the pervasive changes made in the school, all have been involved in the decision-making. Further, the principal has made it clear that the school will not proceed with further changes, or formal affiliation with the Coalition of Essential Schools, without a consensus of staff and parents. Wide-ranging discussions and activities to explore these directions are on-going. In short, the school is engaged in "school reform," but not from a top-down, special interest group basis, thus seeming to avoid at present the trap into which some "restructuring" schools fall (Muncey & McQuillan 1992).

Data Collection. During April in 1991 and 1993, similar questionnaires were distributed to students, teachers, and parents. In 1991, the previous principal decided to give it to teachers in about one-fifth of the classrooms, resulting in a return of 180 student questionnaires from the total population of 1,068. In 1993, the new principal elected to give the questionnaire to all teachers and their classes involved in viewing Channel One. This yielded 1,176 questionnaires returned from the total student population of 1,252 then enrolled.

All teachers were asked to respond in both years, and 50 of 63 responded in 1991, with 43 of 70 returning questionnaires in 1993. Of the total number of teachers about 45 actually had Channel One in their classrooms, so nearly all of those who did not respond are those not using Channel One.

Parents in 1991 were those whose students were surveyed. They received questionnaires via their children, who returned them to school for collection. This yielded only 91 parent responses. In 1993, the principal distributed the parent questionnaires as part of a school mailing, and students returned them. This time, 238 parents 90% female, responded.

The 1993 teacher questionnaire is included in the Appendix. There are parallel questions asked of all three groups, plus teacher-specific ones.

Findings

What are the levels of positive and negative opinion about Channel One in the two years? Have perceptions and use of Channel One broadcasts by students, teachers, and parents changed over time? In answering these two questions, four issues will be addressed: judgments about the quality of programming, use in classrooms, beliefs about impact on students, and judgments of overall benefit to the school's curriculum.

Quality of Programming. A series of six questions (numbers 9-14 in the teachers questionnaire in the Appendix) probed teacher and student beliefs about aspects of Channel One programming. (Parents were not asked the questions because of their unfamiliarity with the broadcasts.) Each question asked the respondent to agree, disagree, or indicate no opinion to these statements.

The first statement "The depth of coverage on topics is adequate on Channel One," had the following pattern of responses over the two years:

Table 1. Percentage Responses to the "Depth Adequate" Question

	Teachers		Students	
	'91	'93	'91	'93
Agree	92	85	58	56
No Opinion	2	10	36	35
Disagree	6	5	7	9
Total N	49	40	180	1,166

Note: In this and subsequent tables, figures are column percentages. Totals for years might not be 100% because of rounding errors. Total N's vary slightly because of missing data in subsequent tables, and are omitted for clarity.

Two patterns show up in these data. First, in both years teachers are more positive about depth than are students, and the disparity is very large, with slightly over half of the students agreeing with the statement, while well over three quarters of the teachers agree. The second pattern is that

while students' attitudes are very stable across the two years, the teachers show some erosion from 1991 to 1993 in their assessment of depth in Channel One programs.

Another statement, "The commentators on Channel One are about as competent as on regular TV news," evoked these responses:

Table 2. Percentage Responses to the "Commentators About Equal" Question

	Teachers		Students	
	'91	'93	'91	'93
Agree	90	57	46	41
No Opinion	10	17	32	34
Disagree	0	26	22	25

Here the teachers show a dramatic negative change over two years in their assessment of Channel One commentators compared to those on network news, while the students show a slight negative change. Again, teachers rate this aspect much higher than students, although the difference is smaller by 1993.

An important issue for all news media is perceived bias, addressed in the questionnaire statement, "The programs on Channel One do not have bias for any one point of view."

Table 3. Percentage Responses to the "No Bias" Question

	Teachers		Students	
	'91	'93	'91	'93
Agree	74	62	35	37
No Opinion	16	19	50	47
Disagree	10	19	15	16

The response patterns for this statement are nearly identical to those to the previous item. The teachers become less positive over time, but still rate the absence of bias more positively than students by a large margin.

Of much interest and controversy are the two minutes of commercials shown on Channel One each day. The teachers and students were asked to agree with the following: "The commercials on Channel One are not offensive to me."

Table 4. Percentage Responses to the "Commercials Not Offensive" Question

	Teachers		Students	
	'91	'93	'91	'93
Agree	90	81	77	75
No Opinion	8	14	18	18
Disagree	2	5	5	8

Teachers are somewhat less likely to agree with this statement in 1993, while students' agreement levels remain basically unchanged, albeit at a much higher absolute level than for the previous qualities. For commercials not being offensive, teachers and students end up agreeing in 1993 at very similar levels, roughly three quarters of each group.

They were asked to agree or disagree with "The information on Channel One is accurate and important."

Table 5. Percentage Responses to the "Accurate and Important" Question

	Teachers		Students	
	'91	'93	'91	'93
Agree	84	88	65	63
No Opinion	12	7	29	26
Disagree	4	5	6	10

The familiar finding that teachers' ratings of Channel One are higher than students is borne out again. For perceived accuracy and importance of the information, however, teachers did not diminish their positive assessments over the two year period, the only case in the six statements for which this is true.

A final item in this series poses a general quality statement: "The quality of Channel One news is about as good as regular TV news." As seen in the table below, the patterns already observed in responses to the "depth" dimension are repeated here:

Table 6. Percentage Responses to the "Overall Quality" Question

	Teachers		Students	
	'91	'93	'91	'93
Agree	76	74	48	48
No Opinion	12	5	24	23
Disagree	12	21	28	29

Although the teachers agree at nearly the same level in both years, their percentage disagreeing increases, with the difference coming from the "no opinion" category. The students' levels of agreement and disagreement are virtually identical in the two years. Again, there is a marked disparity in rating Channel One quality compared to teachers.

In summary, teachers judge the quality of Channel One more highly than students, although the difference in perceiving the commercials as offensive is slight by 1993. Over the two year period, students' responses to the six statements are very stable, in spite of the extreme difference in sample sizes for the two student cohorts. However, teachers shifted their judgments considerably in the negative direction from 1991 to 1993, except for the accuracy and importance of Channel One information.

Use in Classrooms. Students and teachers were asked about use of Channel One broadcasts in class--whether they were discussed, and used as the basis for assignments and tests. Table 7 contains the results from these questions (numbered 6, 7, and 8 in the Appendix).

Table 7. Summary of Teacher and Student Responses to Questions Regarding Use of Channel One in Classrooms

	Teachers		Students	
	'91	'93	'91	'93
Regular Discussion in Homerooms	NA	28	NA	33
Regular Discussion in Regular Classes	41	51	83	64
Proportion Regular Teachers Discuss are Social Studies	6/7	12/12	58	61
Use CO in Assign. or Tests	14	2	44	6

Note: Tabled figures are percentages except for teacher responses in the third row, where the entry is the fraction of all the teachers reporting both a specific subject matter and regular discussions who identified themselves as social studies teachers. The "regular discussion in homeroom" question was not asked in 1991.

Students were asked a blanket question in 1991--"Do your teachers hold regular class discussions about news and information from Channel One programs?" Seventeen percent replied that no teacher regularly discussed Channel One; 59% said that one teacher held regular discussions, and 24% responded that more than one teacher discussed the broadcasts regularly. The total of these two, 83%, is the level reported by students of consistent discussion. When asked to indicate the subjects taught by the teachers holding regular discussions, 58% said social studies teachers, and 37% language arts, with a very small smattering of other subjects named. Forty-four percent reported that teachers used Channel One information in either assignments or tests. Of those naming subjects in which these assignments or tests were used, 79% were social studies, and 17% language arts.

A somewhat different set of student questions on this topic was used in the 1993 questionnaire. The question about regular discussions was split into two, one asking about regular discussion in the homeroom in which it was shown, and the second about regular academic classes. In homerooms after the

broadcasts, 33% reported regular ("nearly every day") discussions, while in regular classes 64% reported that "one or more teachers have discussions...once a week or more often." Social studies teachers predominated again, with 61% of the students naming them; 28% language arts teachers, and a small proportion of mathematics and science teachers, made up the balance. On the assignments or tests question, only 6% of the 1993 students reported Channel One information being used in this way, a far lower proportion than the 44% in 1991.

It appears that over the two-year period, student perceptions are of decreased discussion in regular classrooms, although the non-parallelism of the questions and response categories in the two questionnaires makes it impossible to make this a conclusive claim. Nevertheless, the regular discussion in regular classes, mainly social studies and language arts, has apparently declined from about 83% to 64%; there is a corresponding decrease from 44% to only 7% of the students reporting that assignments and tests incorporated Channel One information. Whereas student ratings of program quality were remarkably stable over the two years, their perception about the extent of its use in the curriculum declined substantially.

Teacher responses help draw a somewhat different picture of Channel One use. Teacher questions paralleled the student queries. In 1991, 41% of all 50 teachers reported regular discussions in their regular classes, and only 14% indicated using Channel One in assignments or tests. These levels are dramatically lower than the student-reported estimates for this initial year of the study.

In 1993, 28% of the 43 teachers reported discussing Channel One regularly in their homerooms, while 51% had these regular discussions in academic classes. The latter level agrees somewhat better with student responses than it did in 1991, and for discussion in homerooms, students report levels very similar to the teachers'. Two percent of the teachers reported Channel One information used in assignments or tests, as compared to 14% in 1991. It should be noted that two percent represents only one teacher.

There were only 7 teachers identifying themselves as teaching social studies in 1991 (this is clearly under-reporting), and 12 in 1993. Six of the 7 in 1991 and all 12 in 1993 reported discussing Channel One regularly in their regular classrooms.

Channel One publishes a teacher's guide each month, containing listings of special thematic features and their expected dates of broadcast. In 1991 51% and in 1993 44% of the teachers reported these as useful. One of the uses of the guides is to locate longer, in-depth videos on a variety of topics in various subjects, which are broadcast separately from the daily program, and can be recorded locally and replayed separately in classrooms of teachers requesting them. This is called "The Classroom Channel" by Whittle Communications. In 1991 20% of the teachers reported using these videos, while in 1993 this increased slightly to 28%. Finally, teachers were asked if they use the Channel One television equipment for showing other videos or regular network programming in their classrooms. The percentages answering affirmatively were stable; 76% in 1991, and 82% in 1993.

Overall, the data about use of Channel One information in the classrooms of this middle school show a large difference in perceived use levels between teachers and students. In 1991, the gap is dramatic, with students reporting that regular discussions are occurring in twice as many classrooms as teachers indicate. By 1993 the difference is much less, with only 13% more students than teachers believing that regular discussions are held. Similarly, in 1991 nearly half the students reported that teachers were basing assignments and tests on Channel One, while only 14% of the teachers said that was happening. By 1993, this difference had also narrowed, with the students' estimates dropping to the apparently more realistic, near-zero level, of the teachers.

By the spring of 1993, over half of both teachers and students saw regular discussion of Channel One occurring; whereas the earlier very high student level had diminished, the teacher perception of frequent discussion had increased by 10%. For both years, students reported that of those teachers conducting such discussions regularly, about 60% were social studies

teachers, with the next most often mentioned subject being language arts. Evidence from the teachers confirmed that a large fraction of those holding regular discussions teach social studies.

Beliefs About Impact on Students. All three groups were asked three questions (numbered 3-5 in the Appendix) about the perceived impact of Channel One on students' attention to other sources of news, and awareness and knowledge of current events and geography. Additionally, students and their parents were asked if students talked to parents about what they saw on Channel One.

One question asked students, "Have you increased your interest and attention to the news during this past school year as a result of Channel One, by more watching of TV news, more reading newspapers or news magazines, or more talking with others?" (Parallel questions were asked of parents and teachers). Here is a summary of results:

Table 8. Percentage Responses to the "Students' Increased Attention to News" Question

	Teachers		Students		Parents	
	'91	'93	'91	'93	'91	'93
TV News	36	30	43	47	41	35
Newspapers/magazines	22	16	28	30	22	25
Talking w/others	78	53	50	46	59	71

Note: Figures in the table are percentages agreeing to the particular object of increased student attention

The trends across time show relative stability in responses for all three groups, with two exceptions: teachers reduced sharply the extent of their belief that students were talking to others about news, while parents increased on the same item. When the absolute levels of agreement are compared across the three groups in 1993, "watching TV news" was agreed to least often by teachers and most often by students. Comparing "reading

newspapers and news magazine" shows students somewhat higher than teachers and parents; and "talking to others" showed parents highest, followed by teachers. It is interesting that parents are highest in judging their children as talking about the news--it might be that parents are both surprised and grateful to hear their children talk to them about serious matters, and might overestimate the extent to which these conversations take place.

Respondents were also asked to tell if they thought there had been a change over the past year in students' awareness and knowledge of current events and news:

Table 9. Percentage Responses to the "Students' Increase in Awareness/Knowledge of Current Events" Question

	Teachers		Students		Parents	
	'91	'93	'91	'93	'91	'93
Increased	98	86	81	67	80	84
Not changed	2	14	19	31	18	16
Decreased	0	0	0	2	2	0

Both students and teachers "softened" their positive responses between 1991 and 1993, so that the percentages saying students increased their awareness and knowledge dropped, while parents' responses become slightly more positive, and ended at the teachers' level for 1993. Even though they agreed at a substantially lower percentage, two-thirds of the students thought their awareness and knowledge of current events and news had increased.

For a similar question about geographic knowledge, each group became less positive over the two-year period, although

Table 10. Percentage Responses to the "Students' Geographic Knowledge" Question

	Teachers		Students		Parents	
	'91	'93	'91	'93	'91	'93
Increased	69	58	46	40	62	56
Not changed	31	43	52	58	37	44
Decreased	0	0	2	3	1	1

more than half of the teachers and parents still believed in 1993 that students increased knowledge about geography.

To summarize, teachers, students, and parents reported increases in students' awareness and knowledge of current events and news, as well as geographic knowledge, and to a lesser extent in attention to news media outside Channel One. Teachers were more optimistic about the knowledge gains, while somewhat more skeptical about increased outside attention to the news, than the other two groups. In general, while there were exceptions, levels of positive responses decreased over the two year period for all three groups.

Judgments of Overall Benefit to the School's Curriculum. One question asked about Channel One's value to the overall school's program. Each person was asked to agree, disagree, or indicate no opinion to this statement: "Channel One seems to be a worthwhile addition to the school."

Table 11. Percentage Responses to the "Worthwhile addition to school" Question

	Teachers		Students		Parents	
	'91	'93	'91	'93	'91	'93
Agree	96	88	79	52	87	86
No opinion	4	10	13	29	10	10
Disagree	0	2	7	19	3	4

Parents endorse Channel One at a very high level, and this has not changed over two years. However, for teachers and students there is erosion across

that period. Teachers as a group are still very positive in 1993, but endorsement of the broadcasts by students has slipped nearly 30 percentage points, with about half agreeing with this statement.

Discussion

What do these findings mean, and how do they relate to the social studies curriculum? Here are some preliminary speculations:

General Support. The levels of student and teacher positive attitudes regarding the quality of programming and general worth of Channel One in this single middle school are substantial, and this agrees with previous research summarized above. The level of parent support is also high, but I have found no other research which has examined this. While there are differences in level of positive attitudes between groups, and apparently some erosion over the two-year period, it is nevertheless the case that Channel One is viewed positively by a substantial part of the school community.

The Student-Teacher Gap. Although both teachers and students view Channel One positively, there is a gap between the two, with teachers more positive than students on nearly every aspect examined. This might have several roots. Teachers generally rate things related to schools higher than students, and this is probably reflected in the present data. Also, teachers in this school voted as a group to adopt Channel One use in the spring of 1990, and their positive ratings might reflect an "ownership" for the programming in the school not shared by students. There also might be difference between teachers' and students' interest and awareness of current social and political news and issues. It would follow that teachers would be more keen on a program like Channel One than students because of its greater social and political salience to adults.

Erosion. Across the time period of the two questionnaires, the students' perceptions of program quality remained very stable, while there was a general erosion of teachers' views of quality. Why? I think there might be three possible reasons. First, the novelty of the program for teachers might

have worn off, with correspondingly higher levels of skepticism aimed at it. Second, the curricular changes underway by the spring of 1993 in the school's general restructuring planning and experimenting meant that there was increased pressure on the limited time during the school day. In my present work in the school, this pressure is very pronounced, and might have eroded teachers' judgments of Channel One's quality compared to competing curricular alternatives. Third, the "ownership" of the Channel One adoption decision felt by teachers might have been eroding as well.

There was a sharp diminution of students' judgment about Channel One's overall "worthwhileness," dropping from 79% in 1991 to a 52% agreement level in 1993. Teachers' and parents' agreement percentages were much higher, both in the high 80's in 1993, although the teacher figure had slipped from the extraordinary 96% level in 1991. But why had the student's estimates of overall worth eroded so sharply, while their perceptions of the quality of programming had not?

One possible answer is that where the program is used--at least discussed--it is valued more highly. In 1991 the program was shown at the beginning of the first academic class period throughout the school. This permitted some discussion afterward, should the teacher or students choose this. By 1993, however, the first period of the day was a 15-minute homeroom, with just enough time for attendance and Channel One; the 7th and 8th grade teachers and students then had a passing period, with virtually no discussion opportunity. However, following the homeroom period, the 6th grade classrooms continued directly into their extended language arts period, often with discussions and journal writing based on the Channel One material. Therefore, the 7th and 8th grade teachers and students experienced an immediate "break" from the broadcasts, while 6th grade classes did not. Johnston and Anderman isolated this as an important difference between schools with high and low average student current events knowledge.

Not surprisingly, then, student reports of discussion frequencies vary greatly by grade level, with 78 % of the 6th graders indicating that their

teachers discussed Channel One regularly, while only about 55% of the 7th and 8th graders reported this. This corresponds to much higher quality ratings among 6th graders than for the other two grades. This might simply be a coincidence--the more frequent discussion is only one possible correlate of higher quality ratings, with others being novelty for the 6th graders, or increasing critical inclinations and capabilities of the older students. Nevertheless, it is an idea worth following in my present research.

Discussing Controversial Issues. The principal "use" of Channel One is as the basis of class discussions, and social studies teachers are most likely to carry these out. If these discussions provide an opportunity for extended examination of controversial issues, then it is possible that one of the often-cited goals of social studies education is being served, perhaps outside the framework of the traditional subject matter classroom. My participant observation work in two 6th grade classrooms thus far this year suggest that this might be true. Virtually every broadcast is followed by discussion, and less frequently writing, about issues ranging from capital punishment to adoption of unwed teen mothers' babies; from bias in news reporting to the North American Free Trade Agreement. Nearly every day's program raises significant issues.

The discussion of controversial issues is providing an interesting focus for my present research. What is needed is a more complete picture of the frequency, extent, and nature of this particular "use" of Channel One, if we are to understand whether or how Channel One is linked to the curriculum and instruction enacted by teachers and students. The qualitative research I am engaged in should extend understanding of these phenomena.

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Appendix: Teachers' Questionnaire

(Questions parallel those in Student and Parent Questionnaire)

1. Are you female or male? (Please circle one) Female Male

2. What subject(s) and grade(s) do you teach?

Subject _____ Grade _____

Subject _____ Grade _____

Subject _____ Grade _____

3. Do you believe in general that as a result of Channel One your students have increased their interest and attention to the news during this past school year, by more watching of regular TV news, more reading of newspapers or news magazines, or more talking with others? (Check any that are true)

_____ They seem to have increased their watching of regular TV news

_____ They seem to have increased their reading of newspapers or news magazines

_____ They seem to have increased their talking about news with parents, siblings, friends

4. Do you believe that in general your students have increased their awareness and knowledge of current events and news as a result of Channel One during this school year? (Check one)

_____ Their awareness and knowledge have seemed to have increased

_____ Their awareness and knowledge have not seemed to have changed one way or the other

_____ Their awareness and knowledge have seemed to have decreased

5. Do you believe that in general your students have increased their knowledge of maps and geography as a result of Channel One during this school year? (Check one)

_____ Their geographic knowledge seems to have increased

_____ Their geographic knowledge has not seemed to have changed one way or the other

_____ Their geographic knowledge has seemed to have decreased

6. Do you hold a discussion of Channel One regularly (nearly every day) immediately after it is seen in your homeroom or advisor/advisee period? (Circle Yes or No)

Yes No

7. In your regular classes after the Channel One broadcast, do you have class discussions about news and information from Channel One programs? (Check one answer)

_____ No

_____ I have class discussions about Channel One programs once a week or more often (please write in the subjects involved)

_____

8. Do you test or require assignments on Channel One information?

_____ Yes _____ No

Please check the one response which best describes your evaluation of the quality of Channel One programs for each of the following questions:

9. The depth of coverage on topics is adequate on Channel One

_____ Agree _____ No Opinion _____ Disagree

10. The quality of Channel One news is about as good as regular TV news

_____ Agree _____ No Opinion _____ Disagree

11. The commentators on Channel One are about as competent as on regular TV news

_____ Agree _____ No Opinion _____ Disagree

12. The programs on Channel One do not have bias for any one point of view

_____ Agree _____ No Opinion _____ Disagree

13. The commercials on Channel One are not offensive to me

_____ Agree _____ No Opinion _____ Disagree

14. The information on Channel One is accurate and important

_____ Agree _____ No Opinion _____ Disagree

15. In your opinion, have there been objectionable segments of Channel One programs this year?

_____ Yes _____ No

If yes, please give examples:

16. To your knowledge were any segments or programs not shown because they were objectionable?

_____ Yes _____ No

17. Are there ways that Channel One should be changed to improve it?

_____ Yes _____ No

If you answered yes, please explain one or two of these changes briefly:

_____

_____

_____

_____

18. I would miss Channel One if it was removed from the school (Circle Yes or No)

Yes No

If you circled Yes above, please write in the one or two things about Channel One that you would miss:

_____

_____

Please check the one response which best describes your thinking about the use of Channel One in your school for each of the following questions:

19. Channel One seems to be a worthwhile addition to the school

_____ Agree _____ No Opinion _____ Disagree

20. I have no objection to commercials being part of Channel One programs

_____ Agree _____ No Opinion _____ Disagree

21. Channel One in school seems unnecessary because students can get news from other sources

_____ Agree _____ No Opinion _____ Disagree

22. Channel One seems to be a positive addition for my teaching

_____ Agree _____ No Opinion _____ Disagree

23. Channel One is worth the time and effort we devote to it

_____ Agree _____ No Opinion _____ Disagree

24. Do you use the Channel One publications:

_____ Yes _____ No "Channel One Teachers' Guide"

_____ Yes _____ No "Classroom Channel Teachers' Guide"

If yes, how do you use them?

25. Do you use any of the Whittle "Classroom Channel" programs in your teaching?

_____ Yes _____ No

If yes, please give one or two examples of items that you have used, and in what classes they were used:

26. Do you use the TV and VCR equipment for non-Channel One purposes in your classes?

_____ Yes _____ No

27. If you believe that you need more support in order to use Channel One effectively, please give one or two examples:

28. Please make suggestions about specific aspects of Channel One that need to be evaluated through formal studies in schools:

29. If you have any other comments or suggestions about how better to use Channel One in your school, please make them below:

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